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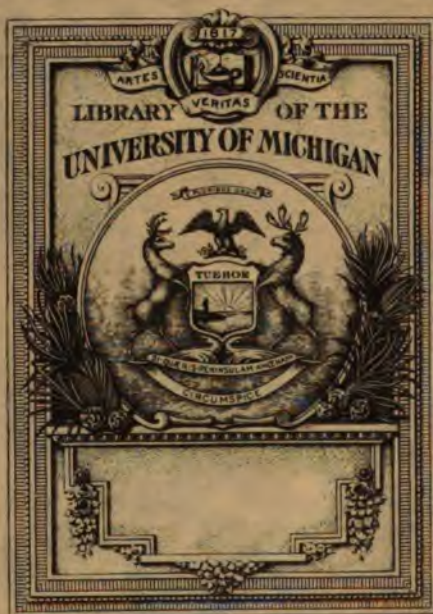
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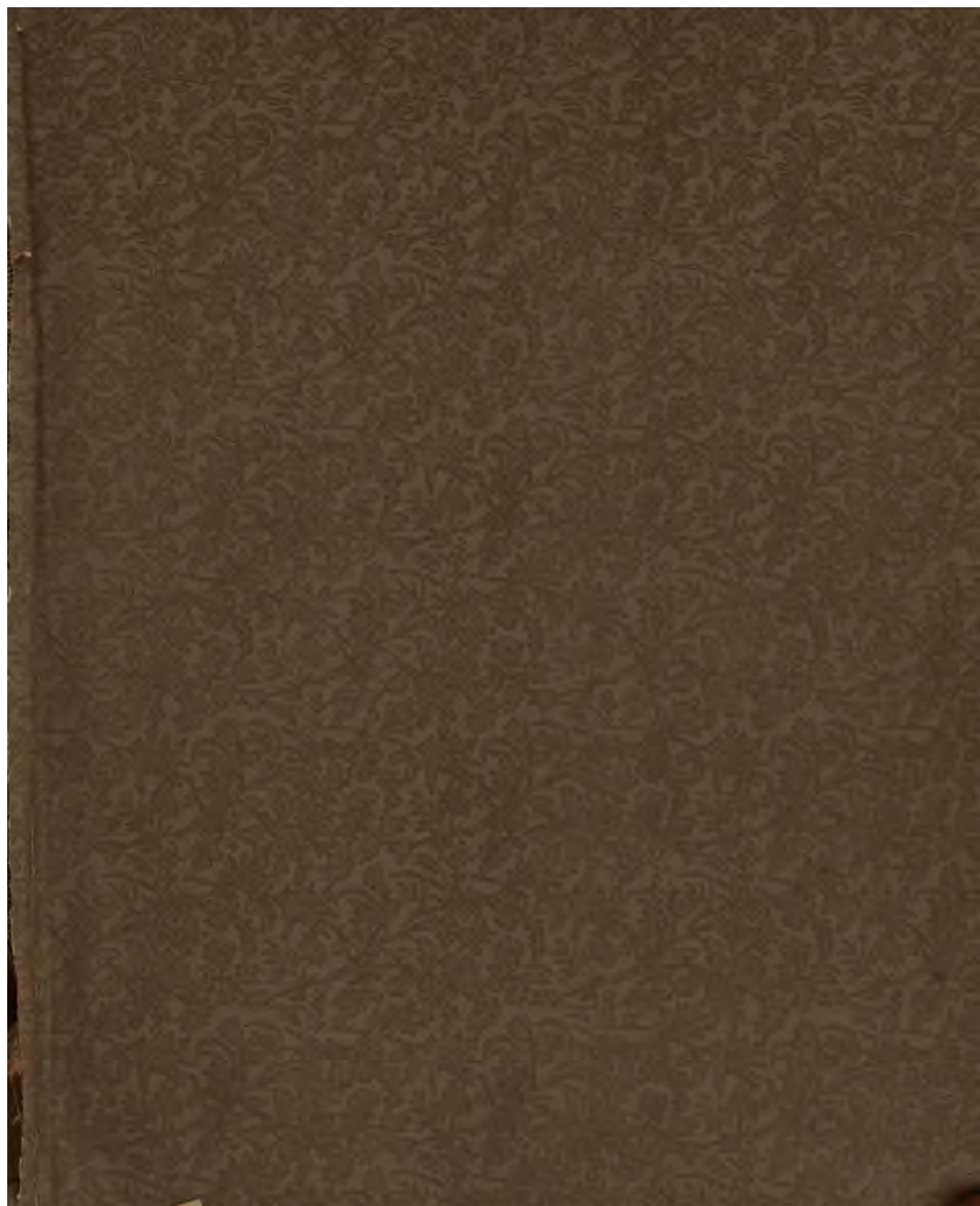
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# "CURFEW MUST NOT RING TO-NIGHT"

BY

*Mrs.* ROSA HARTWICK THORPE

ILLUSTRATED



BOSTON

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY

F. T. MERRILL and E. H. GARRETT.

*Drawn and Engraved under the supervision of*  
GEORGE T. ANDREW.

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"CURFEW MUST NOT RING TO-NIGHT."

---

ENGLAND'S sun was slowly setting o'er the hill-tops  
far away,  
Filling all the land with beauty at the close of one  
sad day ;  
And its last rays kissed the forehead of a man  
and maiden fair,—



He with steps so slow and weary ; she with sunny,  
floating hair ;  
He with bowed head, sad and thoughtful ; she,  
with lips so cold and white,  
Struggled to keep back the murmur, " Curfew must  
not ring to-night."

" Sexton," Bessie's white lips faltered, pointing to  
the prison old,  
With its walls so tall and gloomy, moss-grown walls  
dark, damp, and cold, —







"I've a lover in that prison, doomed this very  
night to die  
At the ringing of the curfew; and no earthly help  
is nigh.  
Cromwell will not come till sunset;" and her lips  
grew strangely white,  
As she spoke in husky whispers, "Curfew must  
not ring to-night."



"Bessie," calmly spoke the sexton (every word  
pierced her young heart  
Like a gleaming death-winged arrow, like a deadly  
poisoned dart),  
"Long, long years I've rung the curfew from that  
gloomy, shadowed tower ;



Every evening, just at sunset, it has tolled the twi-  
light hour.  
I have done my duty ever, tried to do it just and  
right:  
Now I'm old, I will not miss it. Curfew bell must  
ring to-night!"









Wild her eyes and pale her features, stern and  
white her thoughtful brow ;  
And within her heart's deep centre Bessie made a  
solemn vow.  
She had listened while the judges read, without a  
tear or sigh,—  
“At the ringing of the curfew Basil Underwood *must*  
*die.*”



And her breath came fast and faster, and her eyes  
grew large and bright ;  
One low murmur, faintly spoken, "Curfew *must not*  
ring to-night!"

She with quick step bounded forward, sprang within  
the old church-door,  
Left the old man coming slowly, paths he'd trod so  
oft before.







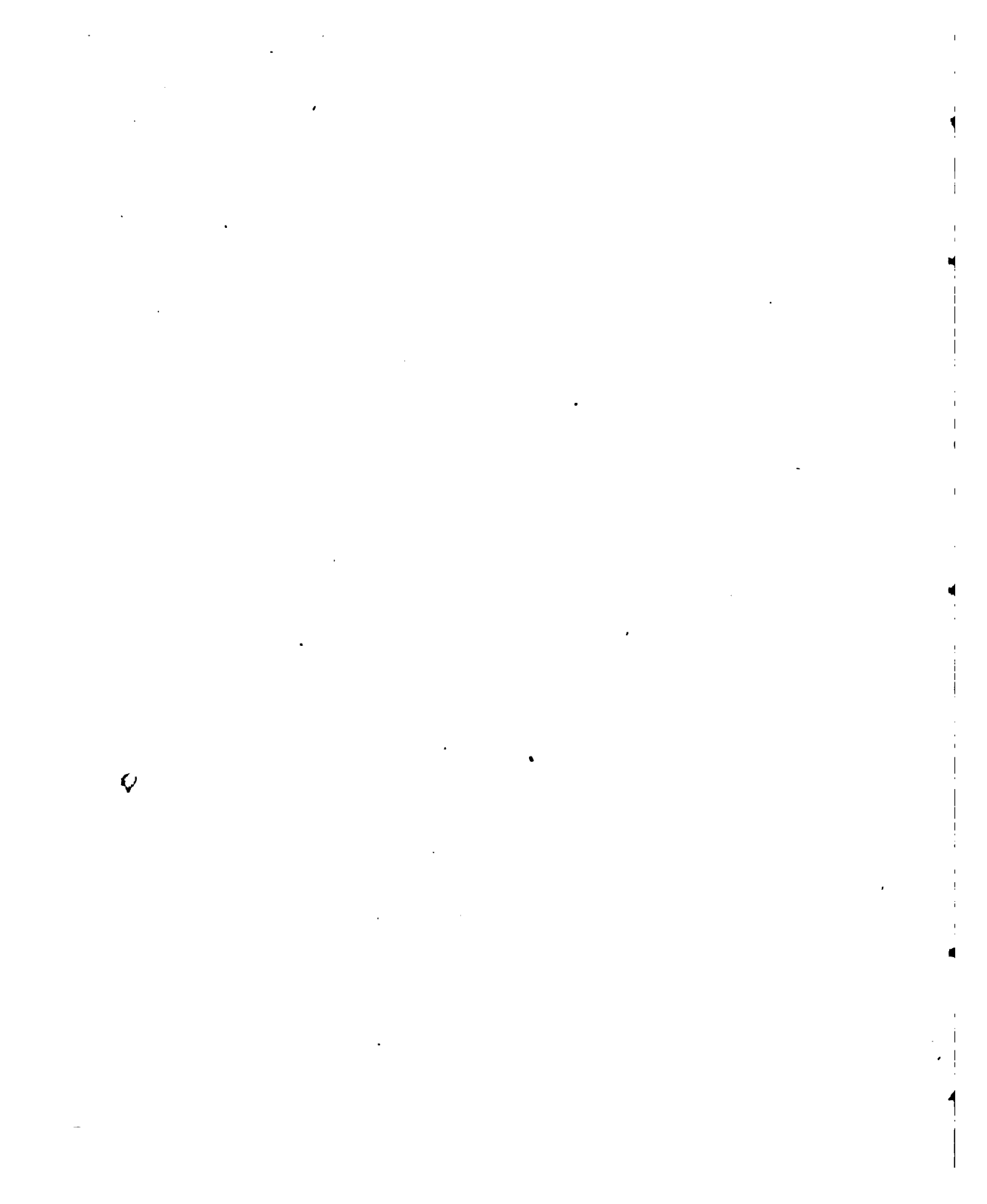
Not one moment paused the maiden,  
But, with cheek and brow aglow,  
Staggered up the gloomy tower,  
Where the bell swung to and fro ;  
As she climbed the slimy ladder,  
On which fell no ray of light,  
Upward still, her pale lips saying,  
“Curfew *shall not* ring to-night!”





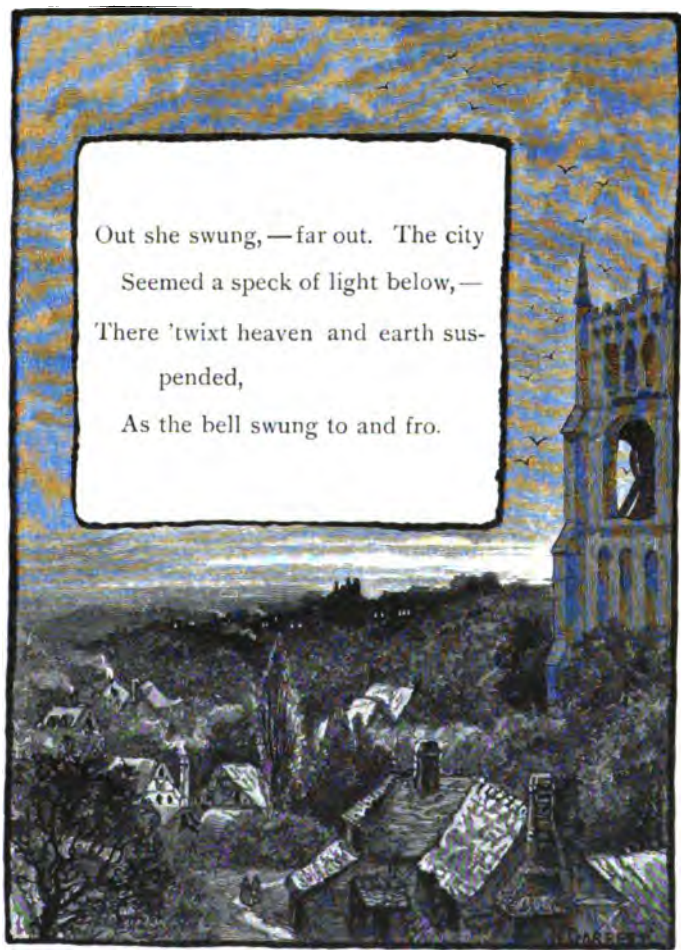
She has reached the topmost ladder; o'er her hangs  
the great, dark bell;  
Awful is the gloom beneath her, like the pathway  
down to hell.  
See! the ponderous tongue is swinging; 'tis the  
hour of curfew now,  
And the sight has chilled her bosom, stopped her  
breath, and paled her brow.  
Shall she let it ring? No, never! Her eyes flash  
with sudden light,  
As she springs, and grasps it firmly: "Curfew *shall*  
*not* ring to-night!"







Out she swung, — far out. The city  
Seemed a speck of light below, —  
There 'twixt heaven and earth sus-  
pended,  
As the bell swung to and fro.





And the sexton at the bell-rope, old and deaf, heard  
not the bell,

Sadly thought that twilight curfew rang young Basil's  
funeral knell.

Still the maiden, clinging firmly, quivering lip and  
fair face white,

Stilled her frightened heart's wild beating: "*Curfew  
shall not ring to-night!*"

It was o'er, the bell ceased swaying; and the  
maiden stepped once more

Firmly on the damp old ladder, where, for hundred  
years before,

Human foot had not been planted. The brave deed  
that she had done

Should be told long ages after.





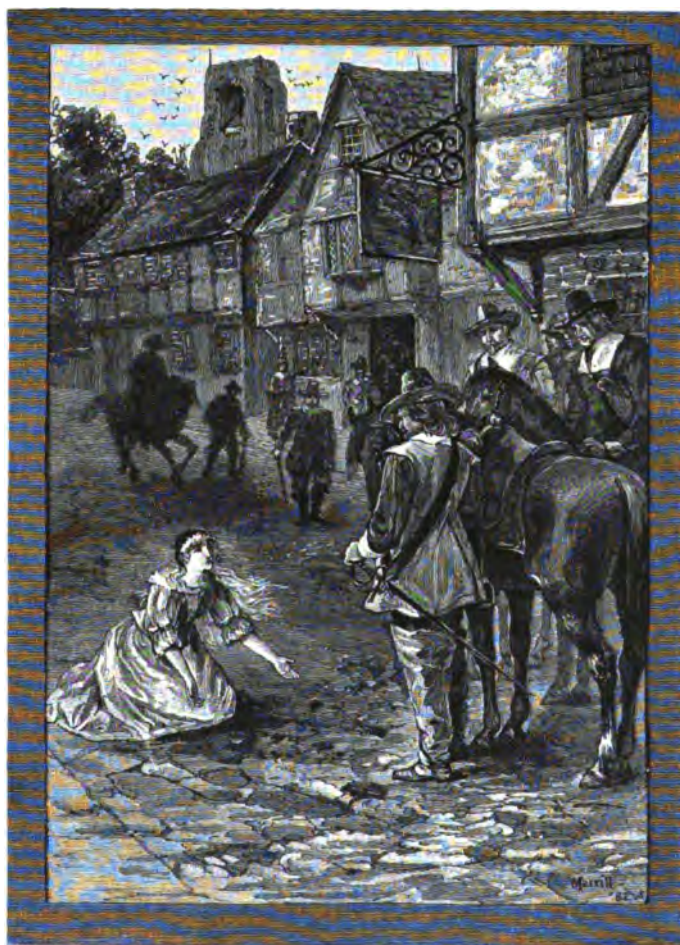
As the rays of setting sun  
Light the sky with golden beauty, aged sires, with  
heads of white,  
Tell the children why the curfew did not ring that  
one sad night.





O'er the distant hills comes Cromwell. Bessie sees  
him ; and her brow,  
Lately white with sickening horror, has no anxious  
traces now.  
At his feet she tells her story, shows her hands,  
all bruised and torn ;









And her sweet young face, still haggard, with the  
    anguish it had worn,  
Touched his heart with sudden pity, lit his eyes with  
    misty light.  
"Go ! your lover lives," cried Cromwell. "Curfew  
    shall not ring to-night !"



Wide they flung the massive portals, led the prisoner  
    forth to die,  
All his bright young life before him. 'Neath the  
    darkening English sky,

Bessie came, with flying footsteps, eyes aglow with  
lovelight sweet ;  
Kneeling on the turf beside him, laid his pardon at  
his feet.



In his brave, strong arms he clasped her, kissed the  
face upturned and white,  
Whispered, "Darling, you have saved me, curfew will  
not ring to-night."



